

MAISON ROUGE.

JANUARY 12, 1832.

Mr. BULLARD, from the Committee on Private Land Claims, made the following

REPORT:

*The Committee on Private Land Claims, to whom was referred the memorial of Daniel W. Coxe, relative to the title of the Marquis of Maison Rouge, to a large tract of land in Louisiana, have had the same under consideration, and report:*

That the memorialist represents himself to be part owner of a tract of land situated in the parishes of Ouachita and Catahoula, claimed by the late Marquis of Maison Rouge, under a grant from Baron de Carondelet, then Governor of the Province of Louisiana, and bearing date the 20th of June, 1797.

This grant has long been a subject of contest between the claimants and the Government of the United States. The commissioners for adjusting land titles in that part of Louisiana, to whom it was presented for confirmation, reported, that, in their opinion, the instrument above referred to, is a patent or perfect title, transferring to the Marquis of Maison Rouge, the title, in as full and ample a manner as lands were usually granted by the Spanish Government, subject, however, to the conditions stipulated in his contract with the Government; and they state, in their letter to the Secretary of the Treasury, that the title ought, in their opinion, to be confirmed. Congress has, however, never recognized the title, and from that day to the present, the claimants under the Marquis of Maison Rouge, have been subjected to all the burdens of ownership—such as the payment of heavy State taxes, and of opening roads, without being permitted to sell with any safety to themselves; nor will the Government, by selling the lands embraced within the limits of this grant, enable the claimants to contest their title in a court of justice. Last summer, a part of it was ordered to be sold as public land, but it was withdrawn before the sales, by order of the Commissioner of the General Land Office, and orders were given not to consider any lands as subject to be sold, except such as were the undisputed property of the United States, and, particularly, none within the above mentioned grant.

The unsettled condition of this and other large grants, is justly considered by the people of that section of country as a great evil. A body of valuable lands is kept in a state of nature, and the growth and prosperity of the country are greatly retarded. To the public generally, it is a matter of little or

no consequence to whom the land belongs, but it is important that it should be brought into market to meet the growing wants of the population.

The committee do not consider themselves bound to investigate this title, but they are of opinion that the claimants have a right, at least, to ask of the Government an opportunity of establishing, in a court of justice, the validity of the grant in question. If, at the date of the treaty of cession, this tract of land was, according to the laws and usages of Spain, the property of Maison Rouge, it is by virtue of that treaty still the property of his representatives. This question, which is strictly judicial, the claimants ask the privilege of contesting judicially with the United States. The request appears to the committee reasonable; and the committee, therefore, report a bill to that effect.